

Writing Assignments Across the University Curriculum

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Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



“uplifting the whole people”

— HENRY MARSHALL TORY, FOUNDING PRESIDENT, 1908

**What are post-
secondary students
required to write in
courses across the
university curriculum
and how often they are
asked to write?**

Written Communication

<http://wcx.sagepub.com/>

**Undergraduate Writing Assignments: An Analysis of Syllabi at One
Canadian College**

Roger Graves, Theresa Hyland and Boba M. Samuels
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Sample size = 4887 [April 2015]

36 administrative teaching units [programs, departments, faculties/schools]

11 universities:

2 small schools (full-time enrollment under 1500)

4 mid-size schools (~15000 students)

4 large schools (25000-40000 students)

1 XXL school (70000+)

What genres of assignments undergraduate students were required to write by their instructors?

How long were these assignments?

Did the assignments change from first year to 4th year?

Did the assignments change by discipline of study?

Did instructors scaffold/nest assignments within a course?

Were students able to revise their drafts?

What were instructors thinking when they assigned this work?

Sample size = 4887 [April 2015]

36 administrative teaching units [programs, departments, faculties/schools]

12 universities:

2 small schools (full-time enrollment under 1500)

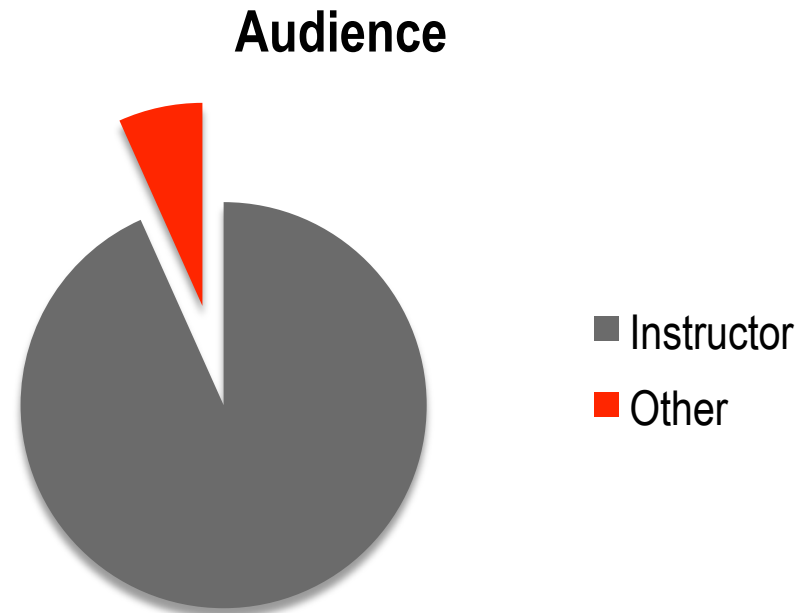
2 mid-size schools (~15000 students)

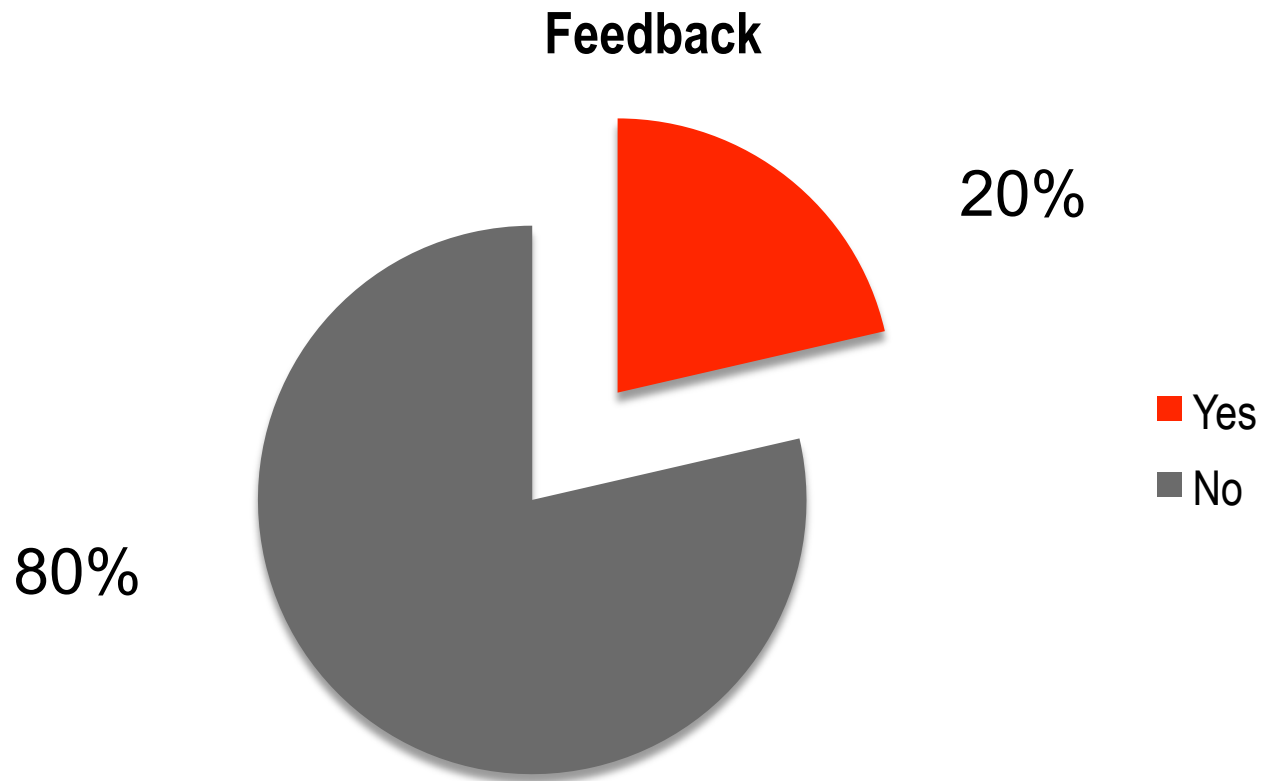
4 large schools (25000-30000 students)

1 very large school (70000+)

93.3% of 3569 assignments gave no indication or listed the instructor or students in the class as the audience

6.7% (239 of 3569) identified someone other than the instructor or students in the class as the audience



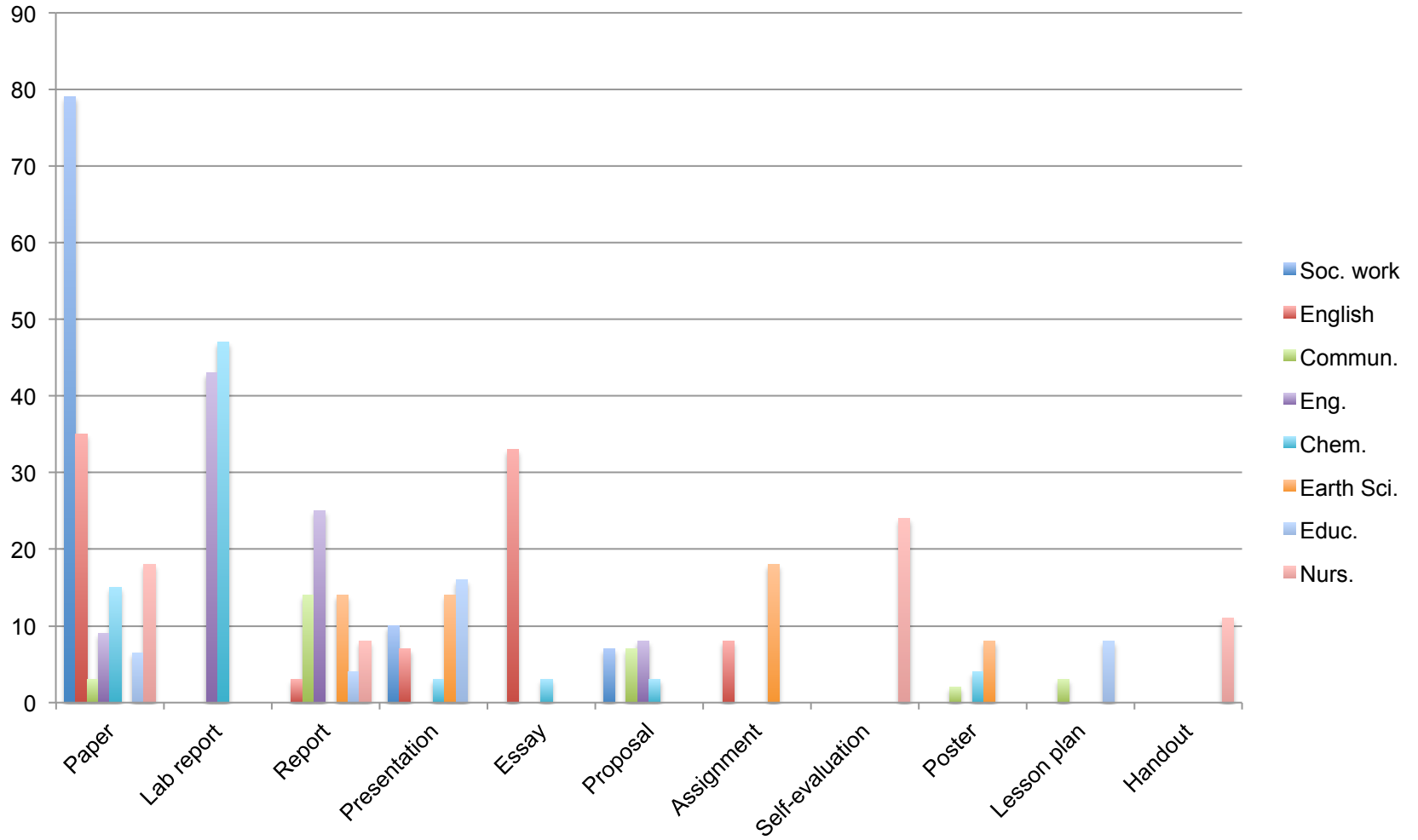


Genres of assignments by Discipline

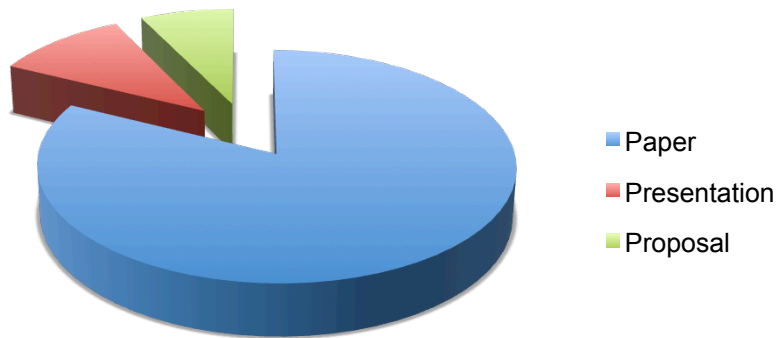
	Social work	English	Communication	English	Chem.	Earth Sci.	Educ.	Nurs.	Total
Paper	79	35	3	9	15		6.5	18	165.5
Lab report				43	47				90
Report		3	14	25		14	4	8	68
Presentation	10	7				3	14		50
Essay		33				3			36
Proposal	7		7	8	3				25
Assignment		8				18			26
Self-evaluation								24	24
Poster			2		4	8			14
Lesson plan			3				8		11
Handout								11	11

Numbers are percentages of all assignments; only the most common are included here.

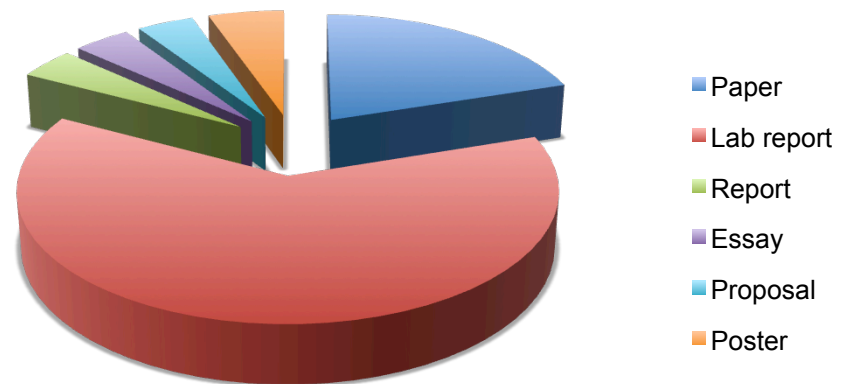
Genre Distribution



Social work



Chemistry



Education

N = 801 assignments

Audiences = not instructor 138 (17%); 78 = classmates

Feedback Yes = 130 (16%)

Rubric Yes = 13.5%

Component types

61 different ones

Paper (6.5%)

Lesson plan (8%)

Presentation (16%)

Professional growth plan (4%)

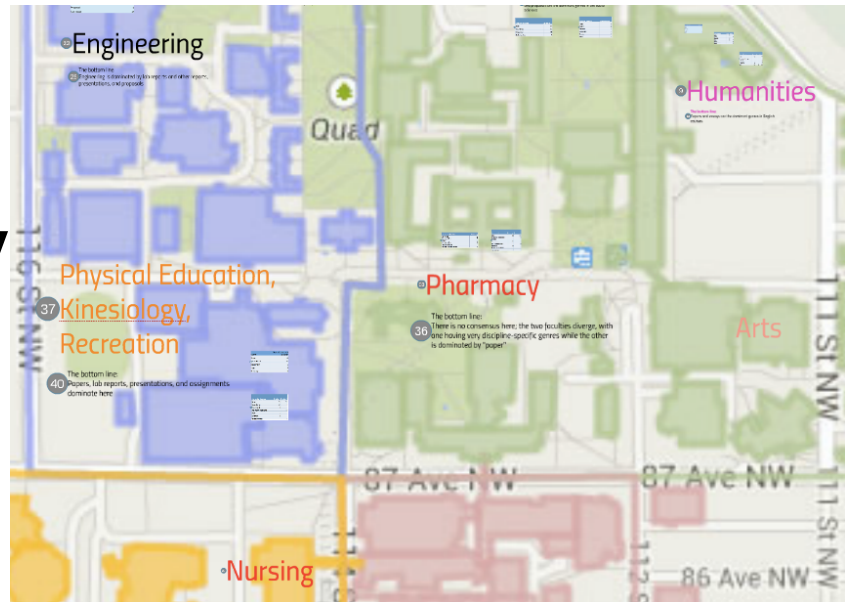
Reflection (7.5%)

Self-assessment (2%)

Report (4%)

Genre by numbers

A data-driven description
students in a wide variety



Neal Lerner, Anne Ellen Geller, and Michele Eodice:

- **Meaningful assignments don't come from a formula but instead from student-faculty relationships around the course and course content**
- **Meaningful assignments for students are relevant, connected to their lives, added content learning, involved researching to learn**

Solutions, strategies, tactics

- 1. WAC lectures in disciplinary courses (1 hour)**
- 2. WAC group tutoring for over 100 classes in 3 years**

Over 200 group tutoring sessions held over 3 years

Over 1500 students in group tutoring sessions

Working with individual departments to grow this program/intervention each year.

Given the wide variety of genres students have to write, how can we support their development?

- **Annotated model papers + clear rubrics**
- **Peer group tutoring in disciplines**
- **Gamification of writing feedback**
- **WID first-year course: WRS 102**

The tropes present in this tale signify a much deeper understanding for an audience of 17th-Century Europe, particularly at the time of 1697 when it was written in France. Just as art is a product of its time, the literary fairy tale is a product of the cultural circumstances during the time it was written. “Bluebeard” transforms from a traditional folk tale to a terrifying study of the human body that revolves around murder and collecting. Originally published in the compilation titled *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé avec des Moralitez* (Stories or Tales of Times Past with Morals), the moral of this tale functions much more deeply in the eyes of a reader in 1697. Using historic method, I will analyze the notions of the body represented in “Bluebeard” to make them relevant to the reception within this time and geographical period in order to discover why this story was in fact so terrifying for children and adults alike.

Identifies the socio-cultural background of the story and the audience, and connects the theme to both the audience and his/her morals.

Announces the method; announces the purpose of the paper.

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Course-Based Writing Support For Your Winter 2015 Classes
Would you like to receive better written assignments from your students?
Then consider signing up for WAC's group writing tutorials program!

- Students **choose** among assignments in science, arts, social science
- Focus on **research** using academic sources
- Connect **social** purposes for writing (genres) to the cultures of the disciplines (citation practices, research standards)
- Students report transfer from 102 to other courses while they are taking 102

GwRIT is a *platform* that can be implemented in any number of courses

WRS 102 is the most worked-on example of this

WAC uses it to support formal writing courses



WRS
102

ENGL
122

Health
Psych